



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

## THE APPRENTICE SYSTEM IN THE BUILDING TRADES.

### I.

THE apprentice system arose in the middle ages. It was well suited to the conditions of small industries under which it flourished, and was the method of training youth for industrial occupations. With the industrial revolution which began in the latter part of the eighteenth century the system began to decline. In America, of late years, this decline has been very rapid, and since the war the system has scarcely existed. The effect of this has been a deterioration in the quality of our skilled workmen, which has made the nation dependent on immigration for its supply. The forces working for disintegration have not been equally marked in all occupations. It is in such industries as have retained most of the system that efforts for its adaptation to present needs have been made. Such are the building trades.

A study of apprenticeship in the building trades is interesting and instructive for the reason that in these industries the subject has received careful consideration both from employers and journeymen.

Of prime importance in such a study is the fact that the occupations known collectively as the building trades are "trades," in the traditional sense of the word, as contrasted with other occupations, formerly trades, at which any person can now work with little instruction or superintendence. In some occupations a workman does not learn the trade. A shoemaker, for example, learns to make simply the ninetieth part of a shoe, and is then kept at that one thing.<sup>1</sup> The occupations of bricklayer, stonemason, plumber, plasterer, carpenter, etc., are properly trades in which an apprenticeship is practicable.

<sup>1</sup>The New York commissioner of labor, in the report for 1886, shows that there are some ninety distinct divisions of labor in the making of a shoe in a large factory.

Again, there are present in the building trades the same forces working to effect the disruption of the apprentice system as are prevalent in other industries. The present conditions of industrial training are certainly unsystematic and inadequate.

The first definite organized efforts to remedy evils and to insist on an effective apprentice system, here as in other branches of industry, were made by trade unions.<sup>1</sup> These organizations, finding the training of apprentices unsatisfactory and entirely without regulation, undertook to control the matter. They did so, they maintained, in the interest of the public at large and of the boys learning trades, as well as for the benefit of members of the craft.

Another matter worthy of attention is the interest taken in the subject of late years by associations of employers, and in particular by the National Association of Builders. This body has grappled with the problem as no other association of employers has done, and has endeavored to find a solution.

Finally, a study of apprenticeship in the building trades is instructive, because here the employers and journeymen have fairly joined issue over that much contested matter,—the attempt of trade unions to share in the regulation of the apprentice system.

## II.

The National Association of Builders of the United States of America was organized in Chicago, March 29–31, 1887. One of the objects of this association, as stated in article II. of the constitution, is “to devise and suggest plans for the preservation of mechanical skill through a more complete and practical apprentice system.”

<sup>1</sup>The National Association of Hat Finishers of the United States of America was organized in 1854, among the earliest in America, with the object of insisting on a proper apprenticeship.—*Tenth Census of The United States*, vol. xx. “Report on Trade Societies of the United States,” p. 96.

The Iron Molders’ Union of North America was organized in 1859, largely to remedy the evils of an inefficient apprentice system. There were often two apprentices to one journeyman. The union wanted the apprentice to be indentured, to serve four years, and to be given an opportunity to learn the trade thoroughly.—*Report of California Bureau of Labor*, 1888, p. 215.

The first resolution presented to the convention was one bearing on this subject. It was introduced by Mr. William Harkness, of Philadelphia, the city where the plan of apprenticeship later adopted was to receive its most thorough and successful trial. The resolution<sup>1</sup> asks for the adoption of a uniform system of apprenticeship, the establishment of manual training schools as a part of the public school system, and the organization of trade night schools by the various local trade organizations for the benefit and improvement of apprentices. In lieu of this resolution and others the committee on resolutions reported for adoption a declaration of principles, to which the association has adhered through all the years of its existence. The first two sections read as follows:<sup>2</sup>

1. This association affirms that absolute personal independence of the individual to work or not to work, to employ or not to employ, is a fundamental principle which should never be questioned or assailed; that upon it depends the security of our whole social fabric and business prosperity, and that employers and workmen should be equally interested in its defense and preservation. While upholding this principle as an essential safeguard for all concerned, this association would appeal to employers in the building trades to recognize that there are many opportunities for good in associations of workmen; and, while condemning and opposing improper action upon their part, they should aid and assist them in all just and honorable purposes. That while, upon fundamental principles, it would be useless to confer or arbitrate, there are still many points upon which conferences and arbitration are perfectly right and proper, and that upon such points it is a manifest duty to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by associations to confer together, to the end that strikes, lock outs, and other disturbances may be prevented. When such conferences are entered into, care should be taken to state clearly, in advance, that this fundamental principle must be maintained, and that such conferences should only be competent to report results in the form of resolutions of recommendation to the individuals composing the various organizations participating, avoiding all forms of dictatorial authority.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of 1887*, p. 10.

*Ibid.*, pp. 50, 51.

2. That a uniform system of apprenticeship should be adopted by the various mechanical trades.

That manual training schools should be established as a part of the public school system, and that trade night schools should be organized by the various local trade organizations for the benefit and improvement of apprentices.

The first section, in particular, was destined to play an important part in further discussions of the apprentice system.

Before the convention adjourned, a committee was appointed to devise a plan of apprenticeship to be presented at the next annual meeting. But before the delegates met again, there came a serious strike in Chicago, in which fundamental principles were at issue between employers and journeymen. In this conflict, apprentice regulations threatened to be the rock on which all hopes of peaceable settlement would split. In this strike, members of the National Association of Builders gained wisdom, which was to prove serviceable in the debates of subsequent conventions.

The spring of 1887 had been marked by labor disturbances in Chicago. When, on May 11th, the bricklayers quit work, the employers prepared for a long struggle. The immediate cause of the strike was trivial enough. It was the outcome of an order by the bricklayers' union that the pay day should be changed from Tuesday to Saturday. But the matter did not stop there. The contest was made a trial of strength. Before it was over, all the differences existing between employers and journeymen were subjected to examination. The employers maintained that it was their right to employ unskilled labor at will,<sup>1</sup> and in

<sup>1</sup> *30,000 Locked Out*, by JAMES C. BEEKS, Chicago, 1887, pp. 133-34. This book gives an account of the strike and lockout of 1887, on which I am dependent for an outline of events. The book is manifestly too partisan to be trusted as a scientific authority. Where I have taken statements made in this book, I have endeavored to verify them by personal inquiry, if they admitted of doubt. I have been kindly aided in my investigation of this subject by Mr. P. J. Minter, President of the United Order of Bricklayers and Stonemasons of Chicago; Mr. Wm. H. Sayward, Secretary of the National Association of Builders, Boston; Mr. Wm. Harkness, Secretary of the Builders' Exchange in Philadelphia; Mr. George C. Prussing, a member of the Chicago Builders' Exchange, and others.

particular that it was their right to deal with apprentices as they saw fit, with no interference from unions. At one time, it was proposed to require the assent of all workmen to the following declaration as a condition of employment:<sup>1</sup>

I recognize the absolute right of the employer to decide for himself, without interference from any source, whom he shall employ or cease to employ; to regulate and manage his business with perfect independence and freedom, provided only that he deal lawfully, justly, and honorably with all men.

I recognize the right of every father to have his son taught, and of every son to learn, any lawful trade as on a plane with his right to a knowledge of reading, writing or any other branch of learning, and should be subject to regulation only by the laws of the land.

As the laws of Illinois provided for no regulation, this might be taken to mean that every boy should be permitted to learn and exercise a trade subject to no regulation whatever, except, perhaps, such as the employer might choose to impose. The law of Illinois simply specified the way in which apprentices might be taken. It is especially noticeable in view of the claim above made on behalf of the law that this statute was almost entirely ignored by employers in hiring apprentices.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *30,000 Locked Out*, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> I know of no state, except New York, where any attempt is now made to regulate the apprentice system by law in any other sense than prescribing how apprentices may be taken. The law in New York is drastic enough, but no attention whatever is paid to it. Chapter 934 of the laws of 1871, as amended by chapter 437 of the laws of 1888, stipulates in unmistakable language that no minor person shall be taken as an apprentice unless an agreement or indenture be drawn up in writing. Section 5 makes it obligatory on the master to teach the boy the trade, and section 3 provides a penalty for violation. Amid all the dissatisfaction and criticism of an inefficient apprentice system which found expression in New York, the factory inspector makes this statement in his *Sixth Annual Report* (p. 66): "Not a single complaint or reference to this law has come to us during the past year. The industrial world seems to have drifted away from apprenticeship, which was once so universal. . . . It is certainly singular there is no desire on the part of either employers or employés to have this law tested."

It is a peculiar provision of the law of Illinois (*Statutes*, chap. 9, sec. 1) that it is permitted to bind children as apprentices only until sixteen years of age. The brick-layers and stonemasons now claim to follow the law of Illinois and have the indentures drawn in accordance with it. As the apprentices are generally over sixteen years of age, however, it would appear that their indentures are not recognized by this law.

Trade unions came into existence, and began to multiply rapidly about the time the apprentice system was approaching dissolution. In fact, in many trades, the principal object of their establishment was to correct the evils of unregulated apprenticeship. In a very few trades this matter was early regulated by conferences of employers and workmen. This was done among the stone-cutters, according to a report<sup>1</sup> made by Mr. T. C. Diener, secretary of the Cut-Stone Contractors' Association :

In the matter of apprenticeship, we also maintain that it is to the interest of the boy and the employer the same. For, by employing too many boys in our trade, a foreman would not have the opportunity to train the boy, and he would turn out a poor mechanic.

It is a rule and regulation similar to those of educational institutions. To make these rules has been the motive which has prompted employés and employers to organize. In the cut-stone trade we have an association of stone-cutters and an association of cut-stone contractors. These two bodies recognize each other, and at the beginning of the season, as has been done heretofore for years, they have agreed on a rate of wages, number of hours per day, and number of apprentices to a yard (which is about one to six men), and therefore we are in duty bound to abide by the same.

In most trades however, the employers have left the question of apprentices to take care of itself. They have been desirous, often, of hiring boys, but have shown little regard for the custom of taking a boy for a specified term of years and teaching him the trade.<sup>2</sup> The journeymen, organized in unions, felt the evil effects of competition with an unlimited number of apprentices, or rather boy workers. They saw that these boys were not being properly trained in their trades, to the future detriment of the craft, to the injury of the public at large, and to the wrong of the apprentices as a class. Consequently, the unions, in the absence

<sup>1</sup> *30,000 Locked Out*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. E. Carroll, Secretary of the Operative Plasterers' International Association, has told me of one Chicago contractor who desired to take two boys as apprentices. When the union asked if he would agree to keep the boys, and teach them the trade, he said he would not. This is only one of many such instances. In this particular case, the union did not allow the contractor to take the boys.

of any other regulation, had made rules regarding the number of apprentices, and the conditions under which they were to be trained into workmen who would later seek admission to their unions. The United Order of American Bricklayers and Stonemasons of Chicago is a good type. This organization had prescribed the term of service, age, and number of the apprentices that an employer might take.

Of course, the enforcement of such regulations by the journeymen alone could not but prove irritating to employers. It took the severe conflict of 1887 to impress upon both parties the truth that "the main cause of trouble was in separate organizations endeavoring to lay down arbitrary rules for the regulation of matters which were of joint interest and concern, and which should be regulated only by both organizations by some species of joint action<sup>1</sup>." Among the bricklayers and their contractors there was no adequate system of joint action previous to 1887. There had been a serious strike in 1883. A committee of the bricklayers' union, in conference with a committee of the Master Masons and Builders' Association, had made an agreement for the settlement of the trouble, in which was this proviso<sup>2</sup>: "And we also agree and declare that the article of the constitution and by-laws of the union which refers to apprentices is wrong, and shall be referred to the joint committee of arbitration hereby provided in January next, for amendment, revision or repeal." The agreement as a whole did not prove acceptable to the union and was rejected, but there is no evidence of objection to this clause. The strike of 1883 was finally broken by the men returning to work without definite agreement. Consequently the rules of the union continued to govern where union men were employed.

The unions by no means claim the exclusive right to formulate apprentice regulations. They readily agree, in the absence of legal regulation, that the matter should be settled by conference between employers and journeymen, though they may some-

<sup>1</sup> From the agreement of the joint board of arbitration, *30,000 Locked Out*, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

times be persistent in asking that the agreement reached shall be such a one as they think right. The employers, on the other hand, quite generally maintain that apprentice regulations are subjects for themselves alone to consider, and they resent any interference from their journeymen. Rather than recede from this position the employers often decline to confer on the subject, and leave it unsettled. Under these circumstances a strong union would prescribe regulations and enforce them. Such regulation of a matter of joint interest by one party alone could not prove satisfactory.

Much complaint was made during the disturbance of 1887 about the rules of the bricklayers' union on this matter. The officers of the National Association of Builders met in Chicago and issued a statement, in which they condemned the rules of the union relating to apprentices as peculiarly restrictive. The rules provided that no contractor should have more than two apprentices; nor should he be allowed to take an apprentice over eighteen years of age unless he be the son of a journeyman who is a member of the union. "In fact, the whole management and control of apprentices," says the statement<sup>1</sup>, "is virtually in the hands of the union, and we submit again that such action as this is most indefensive and pernicious."

The strike had been turned into a lockout, in which 30,000 men were thrown out of work. The other building trades had become involved and business was prostrated. Finally, five delegates from the opposing organizations, each with full power to act, met to effect a settlement.<sup>2</sup> The Master Masons' and Builders' Association was represented by George C. Prussing, Joseph Downey, George Tapper, William O'Brien, and Charles W. Gindele. The delegates of the United Order of American Bricklayers and Stonemasons were A. E. Vorkeller, P. J. Miniter, John Pearson, Theodore Rebush, and Charles J. Lindgren. M. F. Tuley, Judge of the Superior Court of Cook County, was chosen as umpire.

<sup>1</sup> *30,000 Locked Out*, pp. 104-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170-189.

The apprentice question proved one of the knottiest with which this body had to deal. As a condition precedent to arbitration, the president of the Master Masons' and Builders' Association had said<sup>1</sup> that his organization stood on the declaration of principles<sup>2</sup> adopted by the National Association of Builders. All other questions might properly be arbitrated. This declaration of principles asserts: "This Association affirms that absolute personal independence of the individual to work or not to work, to employ or not to employ, is a fundamental principle which should never be questioned or assailed. . . . Upon fundamental principles it would be useless to confer or arbitrate." When the subject of apprentices was reached the representatives of the contractors promptly contended that it was not a proper subject for consideration, according to the declaration of principles. They affirmed that the right to employ or not to employ was fundamental, and therefore the employer alone should have the right to stipulate the conditions of hiring and the number of apprentices he would take. The journeymen of course insisted that the apprentice system was of vital interest to them. It was the preparation for membership in their union. The boy was dependent on the journeymen for instruction in the trade. Furthermore, an unregulated apprenticeship might prove disastrous to them. An instance of a Buffalo contractor was given, who, by hiring an unlimited number of apprentices, was able to underbid other contractors and deprive journeymen of a chance to work.

It was not an easy matter to agree upon. The umpire, Judge Tuley, made a statement which met the approval of both organizations. It was as follows<sup>3</sup>:

A limitation upon the number of apprentices in a craft has always existed either by legislative action or by custom of the craft, and the number that should be taken must be affected to a large extent by the general principles of the demand and supply of labor.

<sup>1</sup> *30,000 Locked Out*, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 399 above.

<sup>3</sup> *30,000 Locked Out*, pp. 184-5.

In France, in the seventeenth century, masters were limited to one apprentice. In England, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, apprentices became so numerous, and because of their numbers—when they became workmen—were so unskilled, that some crafts were for a time utterly ruined. Laws were passed from time to time limiting the number of apprentices in the trades and crafts; some to two apprentices, some to sons of master workmen and employés, and some to the sons of persons who had a £3 annual rental.

It is a law of self-preservation to the craft, and also of equal interest to the responsible master mason, that there should be some limitation on the number of apprentices. If the number is unlimited, unscrupulous contractors may secure a large number of apprentices, and with the help of a few journeymen underbid all contractors who employ journeymen skilled in their craft, and also necessarily throw upon the journeymen large additions of unskilled workmen, thereby making the supply of labor largely in excess of the demand, and destroying the standard of the craft for good work.

It is not a question whether everybody shall have the right to learn a trade, but whether the craft will teach every boy a trade, to its own destruction.

It is a matter, however, that neither the journeymen nor the master masons' organizations should arbitrarily undertake to decide. It is a matter of joint interest, and should be decided from time to time by the joint arbitration committee in such a manner that the number of apprentices shall be sufficient to furnish the requisite number of journeymen to supply the demand, and also so as to prevent an abuse of the apprentice system and an injury to both employer and employé by a too large number of apprentices being secured to do work that should be done by the skilled journeymen.

Three years, by common consent, is the period fixed for apprenticeship in these trades, and the master masons should be allowed, and if necessary required, to take one new apprentice each year.

The number of apprentices can be increased from time to time as the interests of the crafts and their obligations to the youth of the country should demand.

The apprentice should be allowed to join any organization of his craft, but in all respects be subject to the laws of the state and the contracts made in pursuance thereof.

Amendments to the constitutions of the two organizations were adopted providing for a permanent board of arbitration. Section 9 relates to apprentices<sup>1</sup>:

The subject of apprentices being a matter of joint interest and concern both to the union and the Master Masons' and Builders' Association, the joint committee shall have power to decide from time to time the number of apprentices which master masons may take in service. Until further action by said committee all master masons shall be allowed a new apprentice each year, and the term of apprenticeship shall be three years, but any minor taken as apprentice shall be under nineteen years of age. All apprentices shall be allowed to join any organization of their craft, subject to the laws of this state and the contract of apprenticeship made in pursuance of such laws.

On July 11th, after nine weeks of idleness, the men returned to work. Thereafter each side chose annually five delegates to form a joint committee of arbitration.<sup>2</sup> This board meets in January of each year, and arranges trade matters for the coming year. There has been no repetition among the bricklayers and stonemasons of the stormy times of 1887.<sup>3</sup> In substance the apprentice regulations adopted in January, 1894, are much the same as those of 1887.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>30,000 Locked Out, p. 188. These amendments are still in force, being Article III., Section 24, of the Constitution of the United Order of American Bricklayers and Stonemasons, as revised and adopted March 16, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> It is more properly a joint committee of conciliation.

<sup>3</sup> Other trades in the building industries have not profited by the experience of the bricklayers and stonemasons. While these workmen have lived peacefully with their employers, those in other trades have been engaged in contentions and strikes, notably so in the spring or 1894. A joint committee of journeymen and master plumbers met in January, 1894, to settle on a plan of apprenticeship. A plan was agreed on by the joint committee, but the masters' association refused to adopt it, contending that the subject was one for treatment by employers without interference from the union. In the month of April the journeymen struck, and this apprentice system was one of their demands. At length the strike was declared off, the employers yielding all the demands of the journeymen except the one regarding apprentices. This question was to be left unsettled until September 15, 1894, when it was to be settled by arbitration.

<sup>4</sup> The agreement for 1894 is printed in the appendix.

## III

The committee appointed at the Chicago convention to investigate the apprentice system, made its report to the second annual convention of the National Association of Builders, held at Cincinnati, February 7-9, 1888. I quote the report in full<sup>1</sup>:

Your committee in whose charge was left that important question known as the Apprenticeship System have thoroughly reviewed past methods in their relation to present conditions; have visited Manual Training Schools existing as adjuncts to schools of technology, or as departments of the public school system; have inspected the celebrated Mechanical Trade Schools, established and maintained in the city of New York by the philanthropy and liberality of Col. Richard T. Auchmuty, have had the privilege of a lengthy interview with the generous founder, and make the following report:

We find that the old system of apprenticeship, under which the boy who wished to learn a trade was "indentured," or "bound out" to an employer for a term of years, has been gradually falling into disuse from natural causes, until scarcely a vestige of it remains.

In our opinion there is no encouragement for a revival of this old system, for the following reasons :

Fifty and perhaps even twenty-five years ago the employer in the building trades worked with his own hands, and being continually present, could give proper instruction to the apprentice. He took the boy to board in his own house, and to a certain extent had an oversight of his habits, and could control his general conduct to the end that a good mechanic should be the result.

The situation today is widely different. Employers seldom work at the trade, for the reason that there is a great increase in the volume of business, and because new and quicker methods of work have become so desirable and necessary that the time of the employer is fully occupied in attending to business details and in general direction; he seldom or never takes tools into his own hands, or remains long enough upon actual work to instruct in that practical way which was possible formerly.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of 1888*, p. 27. The plan was slightly altered at the convention of 1889 (*Proceedings*, p. 106). I give the plan as revised, instead of as originally reported.

The apprentice is left, therefore, largely in the charge of the workmen. Foremen or other employés give such general instruction as may result from their good nature, or sense of duty to the boy or to their employer.

It is a fact which cannot be disputed that there is at present no such thing as regular or systematic teaching, the apprentice being left to "pick up" his trade instead of having it taught to him.

We are strongly of the opinion that the tendency of modern methods of conducting work will always be away from those general conditions which made possible the "old apprentice system"; and this opinion, together with the fact that under broader opportunities for education there is undoubtedly a much higher grade of intelligence today than in the past, and the fact also that trades are subdivided much more than formerly, so that greater proficiency is required in the various branches, leads us to the conclusion that apprentices must be taught and mechanics made, in the future, by entirely different methods from those in vogue under the system referred to.

These new methods may be briefly described as a combination of schooling pure and simple, and practice pure and simple; or, in other words, of a course of schooling under regular instructors (the schooling to be paid for the same as any technical course is paid for in other professions), and a course of practice, under employers, on actual work, which practice or service shall receive appropriate wages.

These two courses will form a comprehensive and complete system, which, when fully understood and thoroughly operated, will produce a better class of mechanics than the present no-system, or the past hap-hazard system, and will leave as little to chance as possible.

The first step will be the establishment of Mechanical Trade Schools, whose definite purpose shall be to give preparatory instruction in the science or technique of trades to young men who intend to follow mechanical pursuits for a livelihood, this preparation to be supplemented and followed, and the education completed, by a term of service on practical work under actual employers, which term shall be of shorter duration than usual on account of and by virtue of the preparatory course in the Trade School.

While we are of the opinion that the instruction in the study of Form Drawing and Manual Training, as already introduced into many public schools, should be made a fundamental feature in public

education—believing that such instruction is not only valuable for every pupil, but that it also tends to develop a respect and a taste for mechanical pursuits—we are still strongly of the opinion that for the practical training of young men who intend to be mechanics, special instruction must be had in Mechanical Trade Schools as an intermediate course between the public school and that actual service with the employer where his education will be completed, and from which he may graduate as a journeyman.

We believe that these practical Mechanical Trade Schools should not be a part of the public school system, but should be established and maintained by private enterprise.

We also believe that these schools should not be established or maintained exclusively by any distinct association of builders, but are emphatically of the opinion that such associations should coöperate with them, and indeed that such coöperation is necessary to insure their success as the first stage in the education of the mechanic, as well as to establish the fact that builders recognize the school as part and parcel of the new system.

The legitimate and proper method of coöperation in this system, as far as associations of builders are concerned, should be by encouraging private enterprise to establish these schools; offering to assist pecuniarily until they become self-supporting; agreeing to give preference of employment to graduates from the schools; joining in the management by appointing committees to approve methods, and examine students in establishing their proficiency, which shall entitle them to certificates of graduation.

We are convinced that there is abundance of capital that will quickly be invested in enterprises of this kind, as soon as associations of builders demonstrate a belief in their practical value by lending aid in the way suggested.

We recommend that the National Association of Builders approve of the following detailed method to take the place of the old apprentice system, and secure its approval and adoption by all affiliated associations as rapidly as possible, to the end that mechanics may be taught upon our own soil and American boys given the best opportunity possible to become proficient in the building trades:

1. The serving of a regular course of instruction in a mechanical trade school, and graduating therefrom with a certificate of proficiency granted by the same, under rules and regulations approved by a

committee of master mechanics, who may unite in the management of the said school.

2. The preliminary training in the trade school to be followed by a term of practice with an employer on actual work, this term to be at least one year less than the usual term of apprenticeship by virtue of the holding of a certificate of proficiency granted by a mechanical trade school; during this term of service the young man to be known as a "Junior."

3. Finally, completion of the education of the mechanic to be acknowledged after a proper examination has been passed before a Board of Examiners appointed for the purpose by the Association of Builders to which the employer may belong, or to whom the Junior may apply for examination, by the issuance of a certificate by the said Association, which shall state that the holder has passed through the prescribed course at the trade school, and the term of practice with an employer (name and location given) with satisfaction and credit, and is entitled to be received by all builders as a journeyman.

Any young man who has received the "certificate of proficiency" from the trade school may apply for the second examination before the Board of Examiners, and, if adjudged by them to be old enough, strong enough, and competent, may receive a special certificate, which shall state the facts in the case.

This report is excellent, for the reason that it submits a plan suited to the conditions and spirit of the present time. It promises to do for the present and future, if generally adopted, what the old apprentice system did for the times in which it developed and thrived. It will produce competent workmen. The committee takes advanced ground and advocates the same method for developing bricklayers, plumbers, and carpenters as has proved successful in the training of men for the professions.

In the first place, the plan implies that the boy shall have a certain standard of intelligence and general education before he can be admitted to the trade school. Doubtless no boy will be taken wherever this plan may be put in operation, unless he has already spent sufficient time and reached certain attainments in school. However, it would have been better if this requirement had been definitely stated in the plan reported by the committee.

As to the second point, the plan is full and explicit. It provides for theoretical instruction in the trade, supplemented by practical experience in the workshop. In the third place, it provides that those who pass as journeymen shall have proved their right not only by a period of service in the school and workshop, but also by an examination in which their competence was put to the test.

Trade customs and methods change slowly, and innovations can be introduced only gradually. The plan of apprenticeship advocated by the convention of the National Association of Builders was uniformly commended, but local associations were slow in putting it into practice. As late as 1891 Secretary Sayward reported to the convention<sup>1</sup>:

Every effort that it was possible for the Secretary to make during the year, in the way of impressing the necessity for the establishment of trade schools, has been made, and it is somewhat of a disappointment that only one of the many filial bodies of builders has succeeded in establishing an institution of this character. In all attempts to supplant an old *regime* with something more comprehensive and progressive, similar difficulties and disappointments are met to those which afflict us in securing the permanent establishment of trade schools under the patronage and direction of builders' associations, but the one brilliant example of what it is possible to do in this direction, furnished by the Trade Schools of the Builders' Exchange of Philadelphia, is really wonderfully encouraging, for it is an immense step in the right direction, and the debt which all other filial bodies of the National Association owe to their Philadelphia brethren cannot be overestimated for thus demonstrating the practicability and value of such undertakings, carried out on the precise lines recommended by the national body.

However, the plan was adopted to such an extent as to attest its practicability. At the convention of 1892, Mr. Wm. H. Sayward reported<sup>2</sup> that Boston had adopted the plan of arbitration recommended by the National Association. "The joint committee" provided by this plan of arbitration, "succeeded in

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of Convention of 1891*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of Convention of 1892*, p. 124.

establishing a method of apprenticeship in the bricklaying business which covers more ground and more completely comprehends this question than anything heretofore existing, and it appears to be satisfactory in its terms to all concerned."<sup>1</sup> No trade school was organized at the time the agreement was made, but Secretary Sayward writes me as follows regarding prospects for the future:

There is a possibility that the Master Builders' Association of Boston may be permitted to coöperate with the municipal authorities in the establishment and conduct of a Trade School which is to be started here on the basis of a fund left by Benjamin Franklin more than a hundred years ago, the original object of which fund was to assist apprentices in purchasing tools. As this opportunity has not been taken advantage of for many years, the fund has increased from its original amount of five thousand dollars to over three hundred thousand, and, after much discussion as to what it was best to do with the money, it was decided to establish a Trade School, that being the nearest to carrying out the purpose of the donor. Our Boston association has made the offer of its services and hopes to be instrumental in the work.

As to the working of the apprentice system in other cities than Boston, Mr. Sayward writes further:

In two or three of the principal cities of the country, namely, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia, a plan somewhat similar to that advocated by the National Association, although not nearly so complete or definite, has been in vogue for several years, but since the National Association promulgated its recommendations, the Mason Builders' Association of Boston is the only organization which, to my knowledge, has put into operation the said recommendations in exactly the form presented. It is worthy of note that the organizations in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia which have had a method of dealing with questions of mutual concern between employers and workmen are of the same trade as the Boston association, namely, masons or bricklayers. Their method, which, as I have before stated, is similar to our national recommendations, has not been modified

<sup>1</sup>The Boston plan of dealing with the apprentice question is printed in the appendix.

as yet to meet our views, and such friction as they have had in carrying it out has resulted from failure to be full, definite, and exact.

In relation to the establishment of Trade Schools by builders' organizations, I am sorry to have to report that the Philadelphia Trade School is the only one so established. Some effort has been made in other cities to set up such schools, but nothing positive has yet resulted.

You ask if the adoption of the recommendations of the National Association by the Mason Builders' Association of Boston is proving satisfactory. I think I may reply most truthfully that it is entirely satisfactory, and that for three years all matters have been settled by the joint committee without calling in the umpire. It goes without saying that the meetings of such a committee must be handled with care, particularly in the early years of its labors, in order that friction points, which have created sore spots by long neglect in the past, may be carefully considered and slowly healed over.

The experience of Philadelphia will prove interesting for the reason that the trade school idea was there carried out. In 1883 the master plumbers of that city started a school for the purpose of instructing their apprentices. The masters were so busy that they could not give their apprentices instruction in the trade, reported Mr. Harkness,<sup>1</sup> secretary of the Master Builders' Exchange of Philadelphia. The journeymen would not instruct them, and the apprentice was left practically to his own wits to find out how things were done. The trade school was started merely to furnish instruction to apprentices of members of the association, and for no others.

This school served as a nucleus, and constituted a department of the trade school later established by the exchange. When, in 1888, the Master Builders' Exchange of Philadelphia began to talk of carrying out the recommendation of the National Association by establishing a general trade school, Richard T. Auchmuty, founder of the New York Trade Schools, came to their aid. Through Mr. Sayward, secretary of the National Association, Mr. Auchmuty offered to contribute three thousand dollars per year for three years, if the Philadelphia exchange would

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of 1889*, p. 111.

establish such a school. The conditions of the gift were as follows:<sup>1</sup>

1. That the course of instruction be similar in its general plan to that followed at the New York Trade Schools.
2. That instruction shall be given in at least three of the building trades, one of which shall be bricklaying.
3. That instruction shall be given to any respectable young men between the ages of 16 and 21, whether in the trade or desiring by means of the trade school course to enter it, on payment of a reasonable fee, and that no discrimination be made in case of vacancies in favor of those in the trades.
4. That when the trade school course of instruction is finished, the graduates shall be examined by a committee of master mechanics, and if found proficient, shall be given a certificate to that effect.
5. That the Master Builders' Association will use such influence as they may possess to obtain employment for young men holding these certificates.
6. That when old enough to do a full day's work, the young man holding a certificate shall be entitled to apply to the Master Builders' Association for a second examination, and if found capable, shall be recognized as a journeyman.

The gift of Mr. Auchmuty was accepted, and the school was opened September 2, 1890. The total number of pupils who have attended the school has been 336. The graduates during the three years number 150. According to the latest prospectus the school is now divided into seven departments, in which instruction is given in the trades of carpentry, bricklaying, plastering, stonecutting, blacksmithing, painting, and plumbing. For the present, evening classes only are formed. At the termination of the course of instruction, pupils are examined by the committee of each trade as to their proficiency in manual skill and scientific knowledge, and certificates are issued to those who meet the requirements. The charge to the pupil for the entire course of nine months is twenty-seven dollars.

<sup>1</sup> My information concerning the establishment of this school is taken from an address by President Gillingham, of the Philadelphia exchange. *Proceedings of the Convention of 1891*, pp. 178-9.

The school is conducted on the principle of teaching thoroughly how work should be done, and leaving the quickness which is required of a first-class mechanic to be acquired at real work after quitting the schools. The instruction is both manual and scientific.

The Philadelphia Trade School, like most educational institutions, does not pay in immediate pecuniary returns. There is every year a deficit which is made up by the exchange. This, perhaps, explains why other cities are so slow in establishing trade schools. In fact, it may be doubted if Philadelphia would have established a school so early, but for the munificence and interest of Mr. Auchmuty.

In every respect but the pecuniary one, however, the school seems to have proved eminently satisfactory. Mr. Harkness, secretary of the Philadelphia exchange, writes that the plan is successful and satisfactory. In the annual report of the Philadelphia exchange to the convention of the National Association held in Boston, February, 1894, appears the following:

We feel a just pride in our pioneer trade school, the first established under the auspices of any builders' exchange, and from the practical good accomplished we propose to support it with all the funds necessary to build it up and continue it on a firm basis until such time as the endowment fund, which already amounts to quite a considerable sum, shall make further inroads on the finances of our exchange unnecessary.

We commend the establishment of similar schools, wherever possible, to the attention of our sister exchanges, and assure you that you will never regret any expenditure in that direction.

There is a vigorous agitation in other cities urging the adoption of the recommendation of the National Association of Builders regarding trade schools.

#### IV.

In the practical consideration of the apprentice question of recent years, the chief subject of interest and contention has been the relation to it of labor organizations. That, we have already

seen, was an important issue of the serious labor troubles of 1887 in Chicago. The subject has been warmly debated in conventions of the National Association of Builders. At the present time, when the hope of improvement lies in the establishment of trade schools, there is serious apprehension lest the opposition of journeymen's societies shall prove detrimental or disastrous to the establishment of such schools. Among the bricklayers and stone-masons of Chicago, as we have seen, the matter was finally adjusted by agreeing that the regulation of the apprentice system should be left to the joint committee of arbitration, representing both employers and journeymen.

In the convention of the National Association of Builders, held at Philadelphia in 1891, the matter received some attention. The committee on arbitration reported a plan for adoption by local associations. According to this plan,<sup>1</sup> the government of apprentices and similar matters were to be left to the joint committee of arbitration. There was some objection made to this. Mr. Swain,<sup>2</sup> of Kansas City, in particular, did not want the unions to say to the employers how many apprentices they should take. However, in the end the plan of arbitration was indorsed.

In the convention of 1893 at St. Louis, the subject provoked more extended discussion, of which the following report<sup>3</sup> from Rochester was the occasion :

The mason contractors have an arbitration committee with the masons' union that has power to settle all controversies, and to which all questions of disagreement must be presented before a strike or lock-out can occur. This committee has the power to make rules governing apprentices, and the regulations under which we are now working in our city, fixing the number of apprentices according to the average number of mechanics employed by any builder, were formulated by this joint committee.

Mr. Hersey, of Boston, closed his remarks on this report by saying :<sup>4</sup> "I believe this association should recommend that when

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of 1891*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of 1893*, p. 84.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

boards of arbitration are established the matter of apprentices should be left severely alone. Every boy should have a right to learn a trade if he is so disposed." This was followed by a motion<sup>1</sup> to the effect that the question of limiting the number of apprentices should not be discussed in any board of arbitration sanctioned by the convention.

The remarks in favor of this motion rested on the declaration of the principles of the association, that it is the right of every boy to learn a trade, and the right of employers to regulate such affairs without interference from the unions. Mr. Wright, of New York, reported<sup>2</sup> that in his city the employers refused to allow the consideration of the matter by the joint committee of arbitration, "claiming that there is just as much inconsistency in demanding that the employer shall have a certain number of apprentices, no matter what his ability to make workmen of them, as to say that there shall be none at all."

It is interesting to find that the leading opposition to this motion came from a man who went into the strike of 1887 in Chicago with ideas in harmony with it. Mr. George C. Prussing is a prominent contractor of Chicago, and has been an influential member of the National Association of Builders from the start. Replying to the motion of Mr. Hersey, of Boston, he said:<sup>3</sup>

Generally you will find that, with a thorough knowledge of what is going on, things don't look quite so bad in this country as they seem. Why, if we countenance boards of arbitration composed of employer and employee in the various cities, should they not take up the subject of apprentices in their own community? Who is there that knows better the wants of that community or of their occupation or trade than they do? Is it not a legitimate subject for them to arrange among themselves, who should be apprenticed and under what rules and regulations? Is it not their trade? I looked upon this matter much as some of the gentlemen who have touched upon it, before I got into it

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of 1893*, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126-7. The debate on this subject covers pp. 116-133.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120-1.

deeper.<sup>1</sup> I thought that every boy should have the privilege of learning a trade whenever he felt inclined to sign articles, or his parent or guardian for him. Since that time I have read a little on the subject and have had more experience. The city of Chicago had approximately, at the time of which I speak, 4,000 bricklayers and stone-masons. When the joint committee of arbitration came together, representing that enormous body of tradesmen and the employing masons of the city, we told them their rule that no employer should have more than two apprentices was a hardship and a wrong, and an outrage upon the American boy. They proved to us that we did not know what we were talking about. They showed that upon the books of their association 850 odd apprentices were registered at that time. Think of it! 850 apprentices were registered in a community that had only about 4,000 journeymen. It was strange to us, it was a revelation to us; because, among the employers in the room at the time, there was only one, I think, who had one apprentice. Now what does that prove? That the small builder, if he is a mason, has apprentices and as many as he can possibly hire, sometimes, perhaps, does inferior work because of the number of apprentices, and, above all, these boys so employed do not get an opportunity to learn their trade fairly because of their very number. When we found that state of affairs, these gentlemen said to us, "Now we know that we haven't approached this thing properly. Suggest some way in which it can be done so that the boy, after he is apprenticed, will have an opportunity to learn his trade, and so that the competition which we will have to encounter as journeymen will be that of a competent mechanic, so that the trade which has been running down more and more may be elevated in the future. That is our desire, and, as we understand it, that is your desire."

Again,<sup>2</sup> Mr. Prussing said :

There are but two parties to discuss as to whether that boy shall at that time and under those circumstances and in that place learn a trade. They are acquainted with the opportunity offered, they know whether or not that particular employer can teach him his trade properly, and make a good mechanic and citizen out of him. The boy does not know about that; he desires to learn a trade, and would like to do it with

<sup>1</sup> There is a record of a speech by Mr. Prussing during the troubles of 1887, in which he took the position which he here attacks. *30,000 Locked Out*, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of 1893*, p. 128.

that employer, but whether the opportunity exists he does not know, and cannot be a party to that discussion. That boy has the right to learn his trade under a proper opportunity—of course he has. The employer and the workmen that work for that employer know whether that opportunity is offered at that time and place: he does not. The workmen as well as the employer are interested in making good mechanics out of boys.

The testimony from Rochester was similar to that of Mr. Prussing. Mr. Grant, referring to the work of the arbitration committee, said<sup>1</sup>:

We stated to the union's committee that their apprentice laws were wrong. They fully admitted it, but replied, "Show us something better." We answered, "We should have more apprentices." The answer came back immediately, "Will you teach them?" They pointed out to us that the masons who employed the most men and were the best fitted, and employed the best foremen and the best men, did not have the greatest number of apprentices, but that the small builders were the men who were glad to get these apprentices, because they would work for almost nothing, and that five, six, and seven apprentices were returned by some of the small builders a year, and the union had to provide places for them. They said, "What we want you to do is to guarantee on your part, after you take an apprentice, that you will teach him to be a mason." . . . . The principle we have followed is that if a boy wants to be an apprentice the application is made to the arbitration committee, and we find out from the sworn statement of the employer how many men, on an average, he has employed for the year previous, and then he is allowed on that basis one, two, three, four, and sometimes five, or as many as six apprentices, and when he takes them he has to guarantee to teach them their trade.

Mr. Edgerton, also from Rochester, said<sup>2</sup> the taking up of the subject by the arbitration committee had had a beneficial effect. Continuing, he said:

Before this Arbitration Committee was organized, we were entitled to two apprentices, and today, under the new rule, I have several, and I might possibly be entitled to five or six—more than I want. The officers of the union come to me and request me to take apprentices;

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of 1893*, pp. 123-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-5.

they bring boys whom I can't take, and ask me to do it, and they come and ask for other concessions. For instance, three years is the time in which we have proposed to teach a boy his trade ; for the last year or two the officers of the union have come to us and asked if we would not keep them for four years. In our little city we have probably about six hundred masons and one hundred and fifty apprentices, which is all we can take care of and do justice to. We prefer, when our trade school gets established and moving along nicely, to have our boys go there. It is not a pleasure or a profit to me to have apprentices in my employ. We take them now in order to make good masons, and help those boys who are deserving.

Mr. Sayward reported that in Boston the arbitration committee had settled the apprentice question, but had not done so by limiting the number. When the union delegates wanted a certain limited number to be fixed, they were told that the limit at which they were willing it should be fixed would give the opportunity for four or five times as many apprentices as the city of Boston could possibly take care of. If every builder seized the opportunity of having as many apprentices as the union said was proper, there would be eighteen or nineteen hundred apprentices in Boston.

The first vote on Mr. Hersey's motion must have been close, for the chair was unable to decide. On a roll call Mr. Hersey's motion was laid on the table, and the convention stood committed to the policy of allowing joint committees of arbitration to deal with the apprentice question.<sup>1</sup>

The action of the National Association of Builders on the apprentice question, so far considered, has been wise and intelligent, and the subject has been treated with broad-mindedness. On one head, however, in connection with the trade school, there is a chance for criticism.

The trade school is an essential feature of the plan of apprenticeship recommended. The greatest apprehension for the success of the trade school is the possible opposition of labor organizations. It would seem that trade unionists are favorable to the idea of the trade school, but are suspicious of it when

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of 1893*, pp. 132-3.

controlled exclusively by employers, or when the school is entirely removed from any trade union control or influence. Unquestionably the New York Trade Schools have met with opposition from organized labor. This may, to a great extent, be accounted for by the fact that the school professes to turn out competent workmen in a short time, and that the founder, Mr. Auchmuthy, has been strongly opposed to trade unionism. Mr. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, is quoted by the *Century*<sup>1</sup> as opposed to trade schools, but the words seem to be directed rather against Mr. Auchmuthy's aspersions on trade unions than against his schools. Mr. P. J. McGuire, of Philadelphia, says unions would not be opposed to trade schools if supported by the city or state. He also says that Mr. Auchmuthy went out of his way to abuse trade unions.<sup>2</sup> The secret of the opposition to trade schools may be found in the fear that boys trained in trade schools would not sympathize with unions.<sup>3</sup>

In other cases, where unions have been cordially treated, they have proved favorable. Mr. Sayward says union opposition has ceased in Boston since the adoption of the apprentice agreement. Workmen in Rochester are favorable to the trade school there. The catalogue of Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, says the journeymen plumbers coöperate with the plumbing school. Mr. Harkness, of Philadelphia, writes that the journeymen are still cordial to the school there, for the reason that they do not pretend to turn out journeymen. Mr. Stevens reports<sup>4</sup> that the workmen, when invited to the Philadelphia school, contributed money to its support, and favored having the boys learn the fundamental principles of trades there.

<sup>1</sup> July, 1893, p. 475.

<sup>2</sup> From a paper by Prof. E. W. Bemis on Trade Schools, read before the World's Fair Labor Congress. In this article Mr. Gompers is cited as disparaging trade schools that tend to bring an unlimited number of boys into a trade, but is favorable to what he terms the European trade school idea, of furnishing trade education to those already in the trade.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the New York Bureau of Labor, 1886.

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings of the Convention of the National Association of Builders, 1893, p. 119.

The hearty co-operation of unions is essential to the best success of the plan of apprenticeship of the National Association of Builders. Their participation was invited in dealing with apprentices by the boards of arbitration. But as regards the trade schools, the plan of the National Association of Builders provides only for examination, granting of certificates, etc., by a committee of employers. This seems to be a return to the method of regulation of a matter of joint concern by one party alone, for the workmen certainly are interested in the training and ability of those who shall come out of these trade schools to enter their ranks. A joint committee to conduct examinations and grant certificates would be more in keeping with earlier methods.<sup>1</sup>

With the coöperation of both employers and journeymen, the complete plan of apprenticeship of the National Association of Builders may be expected to meet with more general acceptance. The new apprentice system, under which a well educated boy spends perhaps a year in the trade school, and two years at practical work, may be expected to produce better workmen than were common under the old system, where five or seven years' service was required.

GEORGE C. SIKES.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

<sup>1</sup>In Boston this matter is left to the joint committee. See agreement concerning apprentices in the appendix.